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Kidnaping of Moroccan Arouses Furor

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Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Nov. 9—French police said today there was only one chance in five that Mehdi Ben Barka, the Moroccan opposition leader kidnaped here Oct. 29, was still alive.

President de Gaulle has intervened personally in the case and is handling it at the chief-of-state level with King Hassan II of Morocco, whose proposed visit to Paris Thursday may be imperiled.

De Gaulle directed Ambassador Robert Gillet to call on King Hassan in Fez last Friday. Gillet reported to de Gaulle yesterday, then flew back to Morocco.

Denial by Police

Ben Barka was kidnaped at noon in the crowded St. Germain des Pres quarter of Paris by two men who produced what looked like French police identification cards and then pushed him into a car. The police have denied that any French officers were involved.

De Gaulle's personal intervention is believed to have been motivated by the role Ben Barka plays in the "Third World," which transcends his purely Moroccan interests. Failure by France to act energetically in this case could compromise the position of leader and inspirer of the Third World (the developing nations) which de Gaulle has been working so diligently to achieve.

Ben Barka held a diplomatic passport issued by Algeria. He was one of the organizers of the projected Third World Congress in Cuba. Members of the studio audience at radio station Europe No. 1's noon broadcast have asked three days in a row if America's Central Intelligence Agency might not be implicated in the kidnaping.

While this is indicative of the bogeyman reputation the CIA has acquired in this country, the suspicion is held universally to consist of smoke with no fire behind it.

Leftist's Viewpoint

Mohammed Bouabid, head of the leftist Moroccan National Union of Popular Forces, told a correspondent of Figaro:

"The kidnaping has above all a strictly Moroccan political character. It is absurd to try to throw us off the scent by talking of an operation of the American CIA. The truth is that the object was to wreck a discussion that we had undertaken with King Hassan II, with which Ben Barka was in agreement."

According to Bouabid, agreement was about to be reached for a royal pardon to Ben Barka, who had been condemned to death in absentia for a role in alleged conspiracies against the King. This would have permitted him to return to Morocco and discuss the details of a constitutional revision and new elections, discussions for which an agenda had already been prepared.

This is consistent with an already reported desire of the King to provide a broader basis for his government by expanding its support leftwards, thus freeing himself from domination by the extreme right. This element has been riding high since August, 1964, when a Cabinet revision

virtually forced the King to accept as Interior Minister Gen. Mohammed Oufkir.

Minister Blamed

Oufkir is named by the Moroccan leftists as the man who decided to wreck the negotiations going on between the King and Ben Barka's party by getting rid of Ben Barka.

Evidence collected in Paris tends to give credence to the accusations made against Oufkir. It has been established that Oufkir came to Paris secretly at the time of the kidnaping. Ben Barka seems to

have been decoyed to the kidnaping by a "student" named el-Galhi el-Mahl, who has turned out to be a nephew of Oufkir, and was a member of his office staff until two months ago. Also in Paris at this time was director Dlimi of the Moroccan secret police, which comes under Oufkir's Ministry.

The actual kidnaping was done by hired gangsters, apparently directed by a certain Georges Boucheseiche, who left for Morocco immediately after it. French authorities have issued an international warrant for his arrest, but there is a good deal of scepticism in French police circles about the possibility of serving the warrant in Morocco. The police have already ar-

rested Antoine Lopez, an onetime official, and Roger Lenz, a Paris underworld figure, as involved in the case.

The affair appears, indeed, to be a dangerous one for the Moroccan regime, which has often looked shaky and has been plagued recently by a series of strong strikes. Moroccan leftist exiles here said today that the authorities fear trouble. If the present investigation should reveal that the popular leftist idol has been assassinated, the ultimate consequences for the government are unpredictable.